



Real-Time Data for Adaptive Management: the BRAMA Project



Challenge Real-Time Data is Addressing

How to achieve planned results and track progress in the fluid and rapidly changing operating environment of authoritarian-ruled Belarus.

About the Project

Project name: Belarus Reforms and Media Assistance project (BRAMA)

Donor: USAID

Key partners: Pact and local Civil Society groups, Think Tanks, Media and Private Sector

Location: Belarus

Time frame: October 1, 2011 – September 30, 2016

Value: US\$12,000,000

Project goals and aims:

- Strengthening formal and informal civic groups, networks, associations and individuals in three priority sectors to increase their ability to advocate for change. (Institutional development).
- Increasing the number of grassroots initiatives that create avenues for citizen involvement in addressing issues of concern at both local and national levels. (Small grants).
- Increasing flow, quality and access to independent information for Belarusian citizens. (Media).
- Nurturing a culture of voluntary civic participation of Belarusian citizens. (Civic education).

Partners: Internews, ACILS

What makes this project stand out as an example of real-time data for development?

I. “Environmental Scanning” in civil society development and organizational learning.

BRAMA employs a comprehensive “environmental scanning” methodology that is comprised of a set of analytical tools--described below--to glean real-time data from a variety of sources that influences project decision making.

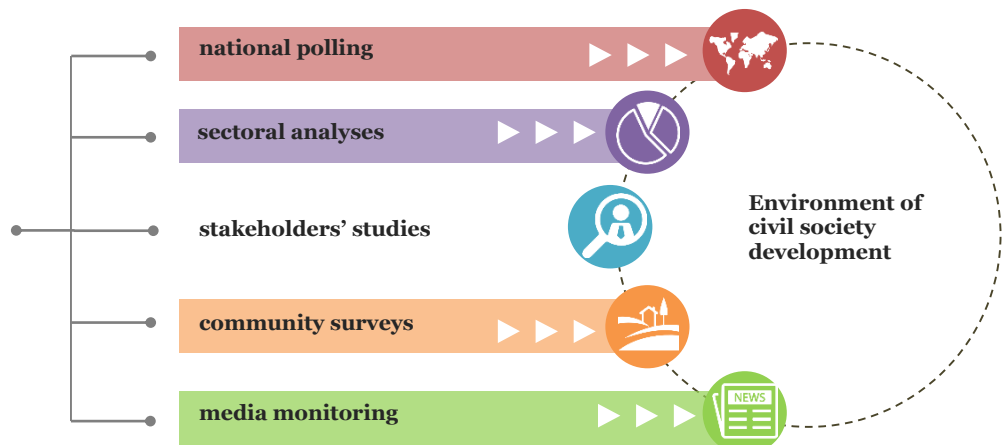
Commissioning national polls provide project staff with data to gauge Belarusians’ attitudes towards civil society, including trust in public institutions; citizens’ awareness of CSOs; citizens’ involvement in CSOs’ activities; and citizens’ overall public/social activism.

Sectoral analyses help project staff to summarize the existing expertise and data regarding a specific civil society sub sector and assess the political and economic factors, trends, actors, networks, that will impact the sub sector’s development and expansion. Sector Analyses are based on a belief that civil society in Belarus is not homogenous, but consists of specific sub-sectors requiring a tailor-made development approach.

Stakeholder (thematic) studies provides BRAMA with analysis of key actors and institutions through on-going analysis of how they evolved as organizations and what impact they made in a respective thematic area and how they are likely to continue to influence civil society.

Community Feedback Surveys provide project decision makers with opinion data about issues that matters to local community as well as community development models and any active groups or individuals in the community, who are dealing with them effectively.

“Environmental Scan” System



Media monitoring is conducted to compile a weekly digest called the Friday Report. This digest provides a balanced picture of civil society developments inside the country. This compilation of articles provides the project, as well as its international and local audience, with rapid and regular updates on what is going on in Belarus civil society based exclusively on a footprint that Belarus CSOs leave in online media.

These five elements create a backbone of the “Environmental Scanning” methodology.

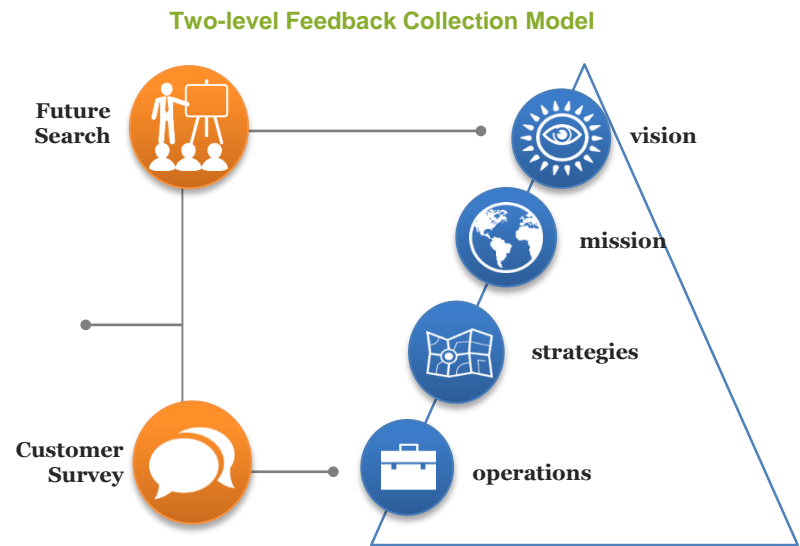
The “Environmental Scanning” system creates a synergy between different data gathering and analysis systems to provide on-going, real time data for project-level decision making showing how global development challenges are addressed locally, on sectoral and thematic levels and vice versa how local solutions shape a more generic context and impact development agendas.

II. Two-level Feedback Collection Model: strengthening strategies, management and operations of Pact Belarus.

An integral element of the “Environmental Scanning” systems is the two-level feedback collection model. BRAMA also applies a two-level feedback collection model which represents a workable mechanism of collecting real-time data in a form of beneficiaries’ feedback and streamlining it into better managerial decisions, better design of more relevant strategies and modification of Pact operations in Belarus. The Model consists of two elements: Future Search Working Meetings and Customer Survey.

Future Search Working Meetings of the representatives of Belarus’s civil society. Since 2006, each 5 years Pact has been utilizing Future Search methodology to collect CSOs’ feedback and stream it into identifying Pact’s strategic priorities and vision in relation to Belarus’ civil society development. The Future Search report is widely disseminated to engage the maximum number of stakeholders in the discussion.

Customer Survey of Pact programs in Belarus is conducted annually. Pact collects stakeholders’ feedback and assesses the level of customers’ satisfaction in respect to Pact assistance to Belarusian organizations and receives recommendations regarding improvement of Pact management. Pact then shares the feedback with its “customers” and makes the data available publically via the Friday Report and the project website.



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The knowledge collected using the “Environmental Scan” methodology provides the framework for a holistic understanding of the political environment Pact works in including country context, sectoral trends, local specifics, development factors, key actors and their activity. This enables Pact to make evidenced-based, strategic decisions on how and when to support civil society in Belarus.

The Two-level feedback collection model streamlines beneficiaries’ feedback and into better managerial decisions, better design of more relevant strategies and modification of Pact operations in Belarus. Customer Survey and Future Search tools are a part of a single holistic approach making Pact activity in Belarus inclusive and enabling local partners’ and stakeholders’ participation in the Pact activity on a strategic level (Future Search collects customers’ feedback for defining vision and strategic priorities of Pact activity) and operational level (Customer Survey collects feedback in respect to Pact operations and management).

How are communities / end-users involved?

BRAMA’s “Environmental Scan” methodology regularly includes average citizens in the discussion on civil society development to know what are the most salient issues and who are the key actors and stakeholders in their communities. By regularly collecting the opinions of people living in remote and rural areas (local communities) BRAMA constantly seeks local solutions to community development and global challenges.

Application of the Two-level Feedback Collection Model is based on the principle that customers are not passive beneficiaries, but equal partners and shapers of Pact vision and activity, bridging their views with what Pact really does and how. Also, being one of the key methods increasing inclusiveness of Pact activity in Belarus, the Model allows a greater customers’ involvement into design, assessment and execution of strategies and services on the ground.

For More Information

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Pact is an international, nonprofit organization with forty years of experience. Our vision is a world where those who are poor and marginalized exercise their voice, build their own solutions, and take ownership over their future.